



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Kirby Kruger
State Epidemiologist
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.4549
E-mail: kkruger@nd.gov

North Dakota Department of Health Issues Guidance for Pregnant Women Concerning H1N1 Influenza

BISMARCK, N.D. – Because pregnant women infected with novel H1N1 influenza are more likely to experience severe illness and complications, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging pregnant women to take steps to avoid contracting the flu and to receive prompt treatment if they do become ill.

A study released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in July indicated that pregnant women infected with novel H1N1 influenza had a higher rate of hospitalization and a greater risk of death than the general population. For some pregnant women, the illness progresses rapidly and often is complicated with secondary infections, including pneumonia. Many times, the illness can cause problems for their unborn babies, as well.

“The best way to avoid getting influenza is by getting vaccinated against both the seasonal flu and H1N1 influenza” said Kirby Kruger, state epidemiologist with the North Dakota Department of Health. “That’s why we strongly encourage pregnant women to get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available. Until then, there are some simple but effective steps pregnant women can take to help avoid the flu. If they do become ill, it’s very important they call their doctor immediately.”

The Department of Health encourages pregnant women to follow these steps to reduce the chance of catching influenza:

- Try not to touch your eyes, mouth or nose with your hands. Your hands may be contaminated with the germs that cause influenza and other illnesses.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizers frequently throughout the day:
 - After using the bathroom
 - Before eating

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- Before preparing food
 - After coughing or sneezing or blowing your nose
- Avoid contact with friends, relatives and others who are sick or appear sick. Try to maintain a distance of at least six feet from these people.
- Whenever possible, avoid crowded settings in communities having outbreaks of influenza.

Pregnant women who do become ill should contact their doctor immediately. Antiviral medications can help lessen the effects of influenza, but they are most effective within two days of becoming ill.

The typical symptoms of both novel H1N1 influenza and seasonal influenza are:

- Cough.
- Sore throat.
- Runny nose.
- Fever.
- Body aches.
- Headache.
- Fatigue.
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea.

For more information, contact Kirby Kruger, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4549. More information about H1N1 influenza is available at www.ndflu.com.

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